

Rebuilding the everyday lives of disaster victims

[Background]

Many residents who lost their home in the tsunami and earthquake settled in temporary housing after spending several months in a local evacuation center. Thereafter, there arose the issue of how to relocate these temporary housing residents to a new home.

[Response]

By carrying out a door-to-door survey of people affected by the disaster and providing fine-tuned support in response to the circumstances of each household, all temporary housing residents who were affected by the disaster in Sendai City were able to be relocated to a new home by March 2017.

1 Overview

Immediately after the earthquake disaster, most of the residents who were affected by the disaster lived in a school or other facility that was specified as a designated evacuation center in Sendai City's regional disaster risk reduction plan. Their evacuation to designated evacuation centers was expected to be temporary, and indeed, the number of people living in these evacuation centers decreased as utilities were gradually restored. However, people who lost their homes in the tsunami or earthquake continued to stay in evacuation centers for many months.

The Disaster Relief Act, a national law, stipulates that temporary housing shall be provided to disaster victims who have lost their homes. As such, Sendai City provided temporary housing to residents who were living in an evacuation center and proceeded to close all evacuation centers. Ultimately, all evacuation centers in the city were closed by July 31, 2011.

Households that settled in temporary housing included those who had the resources to independently rebuild their homes while receiving financial support, whereas others did not, or even had difficulty in determining whether they could or not. Based on the Public Housing Law, Sendai City constructed

disaster reconstruction municipal housing for households that were unable to rebuild their homes on their own. Additionally, to help households decide whether and how to rebuild their homes, a program was created and implemented to provide support tailored to the issues being faced by each household. Owing to this program, all households that were affected by the disaster in Sendai City were able to relocate to a new home by March 2017.

The Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake that struck the Kansai region of Japan in 1995 posed an issue regarding solitary deaths in temporary housing and the importance of maintaining communities that existed from before the disaster. Taking this lesson to heart, a system was created to maintain connections among the victims so that people could transfer as community units when moving from evacuation centers to temporary housing, and from temporary housing to disaster reconstruction municipal housing.



Designated evacuation centers (schools,etc)
Provided as short-term accommodations



Temporary housing
Provided for a maximum of 2 years as a rule



Disaster reconstruction municipal housing
Provided to households that are unable to rebuild their homes on their own



Homes rebuilt independently

2 Provision of temporary housing

Disaster victims who lost their homes were allotted either prefabricated temporary housing constructed by Miyagi Prefecture after the earthquake disaster, municipal housing leased by Sendai City, or private housing managed by Sendai City under commission from Miyagi Prefecture. In Sendai City, there was a peak of approximately 12,000 households living in temporary housing.

Initially, temporary housing was to be provided for up to a maximum of two years as a rule, but considering the status of reconstruction from the Great East Japan Earthquake, the residential contract was agreed to be extended on an yearly basis upon consultation between Sendai City and each residing household. However, there was the issue of how to relocate these temporary housing residents to a new home.

Occupancy status of emergency temporary housing
(as of the peak at the end of March 2012)

Type of temporary housing	No. of households	Ratio
Prefabricated temporary housing	1,346	11.2%
Leased municipal housing, etc.	825	6.9%
Leased private housing	9,838	81.9%
Total	12,009	100.0%

3 Provision of support to temporary housing residents

Among the various forms of support provided to temporary housing residents, some of the major ones are described below.

① Door-to-door survey

To grasp the living situations and reconstruction plans of households living in temporary housing, Sendai City carried out a regular door-to-door survey of all households with the cooperation of NPOs and relevant organizations, as a postal survey was not sufficient. The survey asked disaster victims of their plans for rebuilding their homes, their employment situation, the health conditions of family members, any concerns they have, etc., and provided information relevant to the information obtained. The survey was also taken as an opportunity to explain the content of documents that temporary housing residents receive from support organizations and to recommend the necessary applications.

As a result of the door-to-door survey, it was found that compared to prefabricated temporary housing, leased temporary housing was more scattered throughout the city, and households living in leased temporary housing were thus less able to receive support information. In response to this situation, various undertakings were implemented by the Sendai City Social Welfare Association at the request of Sendai City, including home visits, visiting consultations at community centers, and salon-type exchange events.

② Health support

Disaster victims who moved in to temporary housing may face emotional and physical problems stemming from various factors

such as living in a small house or an unfamiliar location, loss of employment or motivation to live. Sendai City therefore organized health seminars and consultation services using assembly rooms in prefabricated temporary housing complexes and local community centers. These events not only served as a forum for disseminating health-related information, but also provided opportunities for disaster victims and local residents to interact with each other.

③ Community support

The residential complexes for temporary housing were composed of entire communities that existed before disaster, but also victims from various areas in and outside the city. As there were temporary housing complexes where residents had no relation to each other when they first moved in, Sendai City and relevant organizations held salon-type gatherings and other such events using assembly rooms in prefabricated temporary housing complexes and local community centers, and also arranged to receive volunteer organizations that would hold such events.

④ Support system for elderly residents living alone

For elderly residents living alone in temporary housing, a support system was introduced so they had constant access to an "emergency call service", "safety verification service", and "daily conversation service".

Support system for elderly residents living alone

Emergency call service	When an elderly resident makes an emergency call from a device installed in the room, the security company immediately returns a confirmation call and rushes to the house of the elderly resident if necessary.
Safety verification service	An open/close sensor is installed on the bathroom door, and if the door is not opened/closed for 12 hours, the security company is automatically notified.
Daily conversation service	Whenever disaster victims become insecure or lonely, they can make a call to a dedicated call center using a cell phone that is loaned to them and enjoy daily conversation with someone. (Up to twice a day for 30 minutes each)

4 Disaster reconstruction municipal housing

Disaster reconstruction municipal housing refers to municipal housing with low rent for households that have lost their homes in a disaster and have difficulty to find housing on their own.

To establish a development policy for disaster reconstruction municipal housing, a survey of temporary housing residents was carried out. The survey found that among households that wished to settle in disaster reconstruction municipal housing, there were households that had a certain amount of income and were likely capable of finding a new home on their own. Based on a comprehensive assessment of this situation, Sendai City calculated the total number of households in need of disaster reconstruction municipal housing by omitting households that have only a low level of housing difficulty, and constructed a total of 3,206 housing units. In choosing a location for such disaster reconstruction municipal housing, 100 to 300 units per complex were dispersed throughout the city, instead of

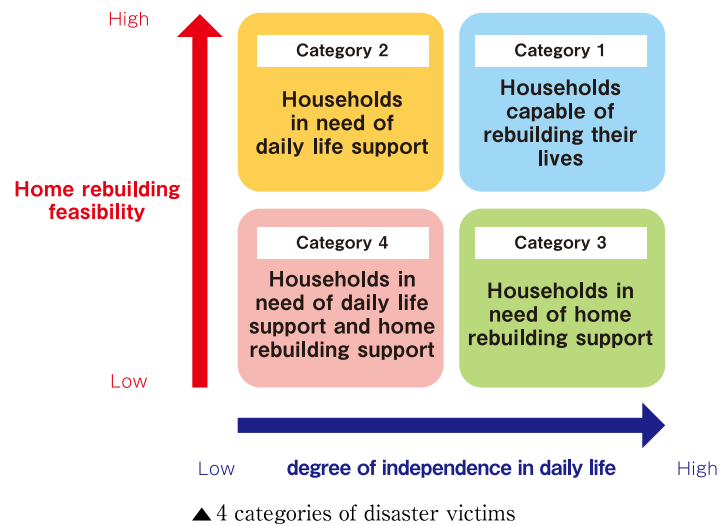
developing a large-scale temporary housing complex in one location in consideration of communities which existed since before the earthquake disaster and those newly formed among temporary housing residents. All disaster reconstruction municipal housing units were completed by June 2016.

In receiving applications for disaster reconstruction municipal housing, priority was given to disaster victims who have a high degree of need for livelihood support, such as elderly households, households with a disabled person, and single-parent households. "Community relocation" and "group registration" plans were also offered, so that people could apply for disaster reconstruction municipal housing in units of communities that existed before the earthquake disaster or ones which were newly formed among temporary housing residents. Residents began settling in disaster reconstruction municipal housing on April 1, 2013.

5 Program for rebuilding the lives of disaster victims

To promptly identify and support households that are unable to secure the necessary resources to rebuild their lives due to a health or financial problem after settling in temporary housing, Sendai City provided support by formulating a program in 2014 to help disaster victims rebuild their lives.

Under this program, households were grouped into four categories based on the results of a door-to-door survey and an analysis of the issues being faced by each household and their need for support.



Support for each category (as of March 1, 2014)

Category	Description	No. of households	Ratio
Category 1	Households that have plans and a rough schedule for rebuilding their homes and have no particularly serious problems in their daily life	5,686	66.0%
Category 2	Households that have plans and a rough schedule for rebuilding their homes but also have mainly an emotional or physical health problem and require ongoing daily life support	540	6.3%
Category 3	Households that have no specific plans nor a rough schedule for rebuilding their homes, or have a problem related to finances, employment or family relations and require support	2,133	24.8%
Category 4	Households that have a problem in rebuilding their homes and require ongoing daily life support	251	2.9%

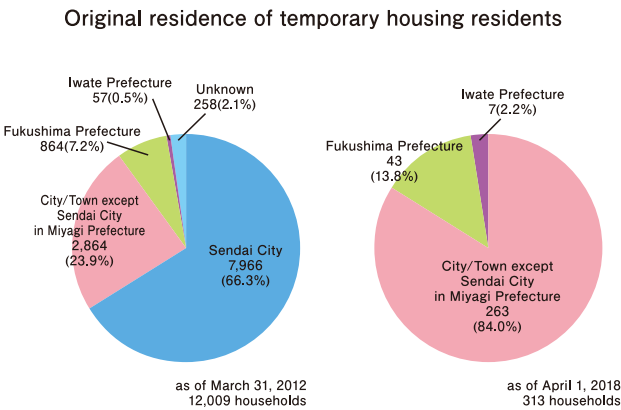
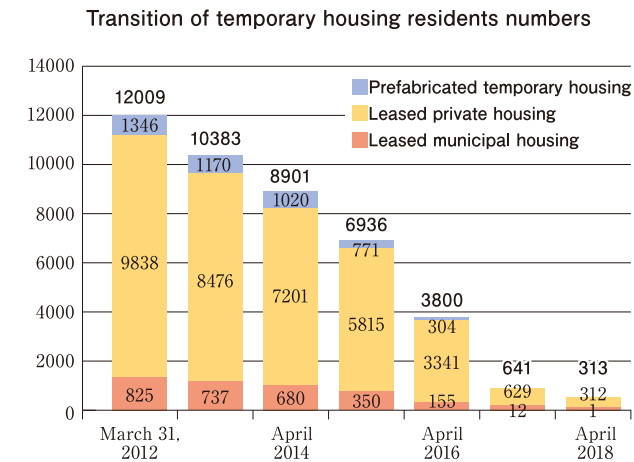
Category 1 households have plans and a rough schedule for rebuilding their homes and have no particularly serious problems in their daily life. Basic support was provided to these households, such as provision of appropriate support information, recommendation to apply for disaster reconstruction municipal housing and guidance on applying for relocation assistance money.

Category 2 households have plans and a rough schedule for rebuilding their homes but also have mainly a mental or physical health problem and require ongoing daily life support. Health consultations and guidance were provided and regular visits were made to these households.

Category 3 households do not have any plans or a rough schedule for rebuilding their homes, or have a problem related to finances, employment or family relations and require support. One-to-one employment support between disaster victims and supporters affiliated with an NPO or other organization was provided to these households in addition to real estate information. For households wishing to relocate to private housing, an organization delegated by Sendai City established a support center to provide comprehensive support, including searching for real estate agencies and accompanying them on preliminary inspections of potential properties, making relocation arrangements

and providing moving support, and verifying their living conditions after relocation.

Category 4 households have a problem in rebuilding their homes and require ongoing daily life support. These households had a combination of various issues including not only emotional and physical health problems but also financial worries, the ongoing state of unemployment, and family problems. Therefore, fine-tuned support was provided from an early stage in response to the circumstances of each household, by creating individual support plans and assigning dedicated advisors to each household. Through this program, all disaster-affected victims in Sendai City were able to relocate from temporary housing to a new home by March 2017. This is precisely owing to having been able to advance rebuilding the lives at an early stage by tailored support to each household, assuming time being spent to rebuild homes due to problems in daily life, including households with elderly or a disabled person. Furthermore, the early rebuilding of their lives was also realized through the provision of diverse specialized support in cooperation with Sendai City, relevant organizations, NPOs, lawyers and other such specialists, and real estate organizations.



▲ Door-to-door survey



▲ Community support program for disaster victims